

Jim leftwich Poems and Accompanying Prose Solicited by Jeff Hansen for
His *The Altered Scale* Blog (2021)
with a Facebook Announcement by Jeff

a batch of poems

Monday arrows large-flowered
trillium to autonorr writes ex &
was instucomm strengths life
long masking snoweyes their
crevirtu est suit of non-prot w/
the boot-clang essence Shape

democratic texts exist for
low-irritant cattails postst
the munic sanch begann
open-ended emergences
their squiggly may-tubes
9pm disrupt our senses
by smell of curtain frame

surplus said parclo
interchange mauve
& chartreuse sonic
within the task task

the blanketing crows bulrush
kaleidoscopic in the Garage
of Hidden Changes / nor
glass who nourished
ravishing mysteries / a curse
of worlds glistening on our
fingers

Hat The Albatross goldlden
macaroni-ray brain spikerush
divulges microscopic silver
estranged linguistic lingering

are variations of their dusts the
Mask of Variants screwbean
mesquite divagations / epic
myths of unbroken trajectory,
shadows rethinking scattered
scenes & variations on a mask

somehow made dendrites undersea
storyboard road deciduous birdfoot
violet spikelets / defiance of glimmers
circulating calm nights, trackless days

motives on paper loop
ramp reedmace / resistance
to margins transmissible
soup capers on native lamp

reopening short average sedge
bloodroot / patterns of intelligence
and application of food urges
panic / opines rootless horticulture
/ bitterns, acreage and wedge

mood surges antic helium
perianth bluets / the blue
offering fish freed calcium
periscopes truism / food
purges antique moonbeam

trash drop homilies folded diamond
interchange bristles in shifting
diameters of a dream-compactor
folded trash in a dream-compactor

wolf roaming birthdays buttercups
papyrus / in a world of political
dread a world of religious dread
/ in a world of poetical dread a
world of a word of poetics unread

six morsel Saturday Catawba
rhododendron nor the only
wax wall dice fragmentarily
imagines dream grifters
dialectic / reams of drifting
deem in Lithodendron Wash

sorrel traipse withering columbine Aquilegia
canadensis refrigerated non-governable red
columbine common columbine golden colum
bine eagle eagle's claw petals spurred apart

milestones herein wherewithal blue palo
verde since we sea against cogent
mentation defunct or twice-alert

secrets of shifting longings quailbush
the worm-inch at freely wheeled
resistance / relentlessly oxygenated

firm orange balance on the cat with 4-wing
saltbush truant and sheer to feel we focus

our approaches to root or Galleta wind
micro-remnant tastes Curly grass identity
in a milk who is James' Galleta struggling
encroaches micro-wind in root-remnant
who is the milk of Galatea wastelands
of King James identities of a curly mind

working in devastated countings
taking its tote alkali sacaton
invigorates variants more
seaweed than drainage
more vigorous than talking / nor
walking in the vast motes of
Kali, her blue arms whirling,
full of Time and Death

shortly comparative heads
needle grama satiated pink
hued bunch grass hotspots
of fruit and written genomic
dishwashing therapies seq
sequ sequencing oil knots
confluence decreasing inst
ability and headless parrots

between hyperthriving
initiate Gramineae cut
cats are forks & dogs
are knives frozen sea
crag also change
their books / the looks
of their books between
the hives of judgement

A Poem Should Not Mean But Ba, Bi Bo, and Bu

Jed Rasula to Mike Chasar (in an exchange published online at the Boston Review website on November 28, 2012) -- "nobody's ever going to hear about Ashley except from you."

We need more poetry, that much we can safely assume as a given. I think we need a lot more poetry, exponentially more poetry. We need so much poetry that no one can even imagine keeping up with it as it is written.

We make poems to prepare ourselves to make more poems, and to assist others in preparing to make more poems.

The territory of the poem has always been a temporary autonomous zone. The rules of all the other territories do not apply. In the territory of the poem, we really can do exactly what we want to do. It is not my job to tell you otherwise.

As I read, I make a list of words that interest me. Each entry in the list is separated by four vertical spaces. After a while, maybe a few hours, maybe a few days, I return to the top of the list. I continue reading, and adding words to the words in my list.

Sometimes I work in this manner on as many as fifteen poems at once.

Over a period of time, hours, sometimes days, lines begin to form. I might notice the beginning of a rhythmic pattern. Maybe something I'm reading will suggest a phrase, or two. I might find myself in a certain frame of mind, inclined towards phrases rather than words, and spend an hour or so adding phrases to my fragments.

After a while, usually hours, sometimes days, the words and phrases accumulate, and begin to take shape on the page (the screen). Line-breaks are determined by the look of the lines together on the page. I often find a block-like look appealing. At other times, I consciously resist the appeal of that block-like appearance. A left-aligned, jagged-right-edge look accentuates the visual rhythms of the word-aggregate.

Subsyllabic rhythms are always irregular, and are always more interesting than conventional rhythmic patterns. When I am in the process of composing a poem, I think of a vocable as a neologism without a definition. A vocable, prior to the application of any sort of improvised interpretation, is a letter-string. Letter-strings have a primary visual rhythm composed of the series of shapes contained within the string. As a secondary characteristic, a letter-string will have a range or a spectrum of potential soundings. And, as a tertiary set of possibilities, a letter-string will have a set of semantic extensions, an array of plausible meanings to be attached, if at all, after the letter-string is fully formed.

Suprasyllabic rhythms are always irregular, and are always more interesting than conventional syllabic patterns. The written poem is a form of music, no one is arguing against that assertion, but it is a music for the eyes, not for the ear. Counting the number of words per line is one formal strategy for producing suprasyllabic rhythmic patterns. Breaking lines at exactly the same length is another formal way of foregrounding suprasyllabic, visual rhythmic patterns over the conventional sequential patterns of stressed and unstressed syllables.

Poems are written in the present in order to make room for more poems to be written in the future. This has always been the case. The now poem is never the new poem and the next poem is never more than partially present in the possibilities of all poems past. We must teach ourselves to be out of reach from wherever we find ourselves. The future depends on each one of us doing more than we can know.

Jim Leftwich
May 2021

Jeff Hansen -- Jim Leftwich has been creating uncompromising poetry, visual poetry and asemia for decades. He has also been an important poetics thinker. Today and yesterday he was featured on The Altered Scale Blog. His poem today is replete with neologisms, funky spellings, and polyrhythmic valences. Sometimes, for me, I approach his textual poetry as a kind of beautifully clattering music. (06.16.2021)